

IMPLEMENTING AN ELEVEN YEAR THROUGH-TRAIN MODEL TO COMPLETE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION -- IS IT POSSIBLE? WHY NOT? -- SOME CHALLENGES AND PRINCIPLES

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Hong Kong, an international city in the orient, is in a gifted position of integrating different cultures and opportunities of the world. When the sovereignty of Hong Kong was returned to China in 1997 after 99 years of British Colonial Government, the whole world raised its eyebrows to see how the ideology of "One Country, Two Systems" works, especially in her political, economical, educational and social systems which have been so different with her motherland.

In response to the increasing global competitiveness and rapid changes, and for the city to keep pace with world developments, the Hong Kong Education and Manpower Bureau has started off a series of education reforms in year 2000, and many innovative initiatives have been underway.

In the past, schools in Hong Kong were bound by many rules, regulations and guidelines from the government, especially in school administration and curriculum perspectives. One important education reform in Hong Kong is giving the schools more space and autonomy to mount school-based developments.

In response to the growing interest in the Through-Train Project across the territory and to gain a better understanding of the dynamics of school change, Logos Academy of Hong Kong has taken advantage of this golden opportunity to undertake different school-based curriculum innovative measures and has begun to develop new approaches in curriculum development.

In an ever-advancing knowledge-based society, the schools are facing new challenges to prepare our children for a dynamically changing environment. Children need to develop a global outlook, to master a repertoire of generic skills, to have positive attitudes, to acquire and construct knowledge, and to learn how to learn.

As learning and teaching is moving away from imparting student with mere "knowledge", the simple one-size-fits-all solution of a prescribed years of schooling in primary and secondary schools is no longer valid. The rigid and prescriptive subject syllabuses designated for different year-levels (e.g. Primary 1, ... to Secondary 6, etc.) will no longer meet the developmental needs of students. The different key stages in primary, junior and senior secondary levels need to be redefined to provide a broad and balanced curriculum which maintains seamless continuity.

Logos Academy of Hong Kong has started an "Eleven Year Through-Train" program in September 2002. The children who are admitted to our primary school program may enter a continuous secondary school program and take their matriculation examination at the end of their eleven-year schooling. An eleven year curriculum is taken as a coherent, progressive and continuous process across primary and secondary education so that learning experiences are connected, without students spending curriculum time in some undue overlapping subject matters. The "Through-Train"

mode will also minimize the disruption and readjustment that most students entering secondary school may have to face in other schools.

The eleven-year program consists of three stages, each with its particular characteristics:

1. **Foundation Stage:** (FS1- FS3): The first Foundation Stage is a three-year program designed to cultivate motivations and pleasures in learning. At Foundation Stage, we would help students establish a firm foundation of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes necessary for further learning, and forming good study habits. There would be a particular emphasis on literacy, numeracy, communication, creativity, and family life education, thereby establishing some skills and values essential for success in different areas of learning in the subsequent years. Moreover, learning activities are designed to encourage students to integrate learning and their own experiences.

2. **Developmental Stage:** (DS1- DS5): The second Developmental Stage will be organized around a five-year curriculum. At Developmental Stage, the main purpose is to foster and strengthen students' basic concepts and skills, values and attitudes through their continued acquisition and construction of knowledge in different key learning areas. The students will be helped to discover and develop their strengths and potentials, which would provide the basis for their choice of subject options in later years.

3. **Mastery Stage** (MS1 – MS3): With a rigorous curriculum leading to this stage, in the final three years in the Mastery stage, the curriculum will be diversified to provide students with a variety of options for some specialization to cater for their different aptitudes and learning needs. The students are expected to show the ability to consolidate and integrate what they have learned and make preparations for competitive university entrance examinations.

At the end of 11 years, Logos Academy students will be ready to take the International Baccalaureate Diploma examination as well as the local university entrance examinations to enter overseas or local universities. The inter-relatedness of all the stages is geared to improving the learning experiences for the students. This re-definition of Key Learning Stages, we believe, is forward looking, keeping abreast of global trends, in line with the demographic, economic, political, social and technological advancements, as well as in harmony with the local culture and environments.

To ensure the success of this innovative through-train model, the unfailing support of two key stake-holders are vital: On the one hand, the Government Authorities need to give green light for the operation of this model; and on the other hand, parents are willing to send their children to this innovative fee-paying school and keep them in the school for eleven years. If this "Eleven-year Through-Train Schooling System" model is proved to be successful, it will throw some light on a new schooling structure – which will have significant implications on the government's funding and planning policies.

In the school, as the whole staff develops common visions, we follow three guidelines very closely in developing the school-based curriculum and other innovations : All pedagogical measures have to tie in with the curriculum development initiatives in Hong Kong, parallel with the global developments in education, and most important of all, matching with child development in different stages. To lay the first cornerstone, situation analysis is conducted. The school takes stock of her resources and strengths, identifies challenges and opportunities, and takes weaknesses and threats into consideration. To construct a new road map for learning, the whole staff develops some common

broad visions and global outlook. And in practice, we start to build the ethos of our school from scratch, with concerted efforts.

During these two and a half years of practice, the school has taken on board the development of our school-based curriculum and mounting other related innovations, e.g. deploying subject specialists to teach across the whole year band of young children, creating platforms to accommodate new learning areas and the newest technologies, and engaging parents in different projects of the school helping their children. In this process, teachers, parents and students have gained much insight into problems, and indeed created valuable skills and experiences and knowledge. The school has become a learning organization, and is constantly engaged in the process of self-renewal.

All stakeholders continue to be involved in meaningful ways with consistent efforts, to reconfirm their commitment, to continue to enhance their capacity, to live up to their highest aspirations, and above all, to provide quality education to all our students.

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